

READING CARTOONS

HOW TO READ AND INTERPRET POLITICAL CARTOONS

by Buck Jones, cartoonist and illustrator

Sweatshops
Triangle shirtwaiste
R R
standard oil
child labor
4 pay
political corporation-
policies

guided age
living conditions
Food
health care
buns
school
crime

Today
war
global warming
taxes
campaign funding
fire arms
elections/candidates
School / shooting /
bridge bombing
Patriot Act
Food Recall
Obesity
gas
insurance

A cartoonist is like an editorial writer. Both watch the news and read the newspapers to keep up with current events that influence people and their world. The difference is that the writer gets his or her point of view across to the reader by using persuasive language and sound arguments. The cartoonist, on the other hand, has to get the message to the viewer with a picture.

The cartoonist looks for ways in which to present ideas so that the ideas are instantly understandable. Often cartoonists use humor while portraying a serious issue. This is done through exaggeration and symbolism.

Knowing how a cartoonist works can help you interpret cartoons. You should (1) identify the issue, (2) look for exaggeration and symbolism, and (3) examine the viewpoints and motives of the cartoonist. Each political cartoonist has a certain point of view—that is, by definition, his or her job.